



# **2021 Colorado Safe Schools Summit**

## **Today's Marijuana & the Adolescent Brain**

October 22, 2021



# Who we are:

- › Citizens who came together after marijuana was legalized in CO in 2012
- › Governor's task force ranked public health and kids' safety and health dead last of six priorities--ease for marijuana consumer #1 **OUR MANDATE WAS SET**
- › We formed Smart Colorado to put kids' futures and public safety before marijuana profits, have been the sole voice dedicated to kids
- › We are a non-profit, non-partisan citizen led organization
- › Today nearly 8,000 members and a staff of 6, plus expert consultants
- › We are funded by everyday citizens as well as private foundations and do not take any marijuana tax revenue or funds from the marijuana industry
- › We have transitioned to One Chance to Grow Up as marijuana is being legalized and commercialized across the country- we have lessons to share!

# Let's set the record straight:

- › We are here to talk about kids and the impacts of marijuana and marijuana product use
- › Our time together is not about adult use or the pros/cons of marijuana legalization
- › Today, I will be referring to this drug as marijuana as that is the verbiage that was used in Amendment 64
- › Regardless if you or someone you know uses marijuana, we should be able to agree that marijuana and kids do not mix
- › We supported FDA approved Epidiolex (CBD derived from the marijuana plant) as well as funding for research

# Here's Why.....



# What we do & why it matters

## **Educate**

- › Hundreds of meetings and briefings with schools and community groups, local governments and other organizations including CO State Dept of Revenue, which regulates MJ
- › Participation in several State and Local committees
- › Many successful and some unsuccessful efforts to stop cities and counties from adopting commercial MJ

## **Use Media to provide sound and accurate information**

- › Hundreds of earned media stories, opinion pieces and paid media advertising throughout CO, DC and in states pursuing legalization
- › Offer THC Photos as an unbiased, realistic source for products on the legal market- it's no longer a plant!

# What (continued)?

## **Change policy through putting safeguards in place**

- › Significant positive impacts on CO policies through advocacy and bill sponsorship–Over 24 bills passed:
  - › Product labeling including THC, CBD and Potency
  - › Warning Labels– including improved mental health warnings
  - › Child resistant packaging
  - › Edible markings
  - › Pregnancy warnings
  - › 150 additional behavioral specialists in the schools
  - › Potency studies
  - › Delivery and social consumption restrictions

## **Significant positive impact at the national level**

- › Direct access to key Senator and Representatives– educating on the MORE and SAFE Banking Acts



# Trick or Treat? 2014





# Educating on THC Potency: 2015





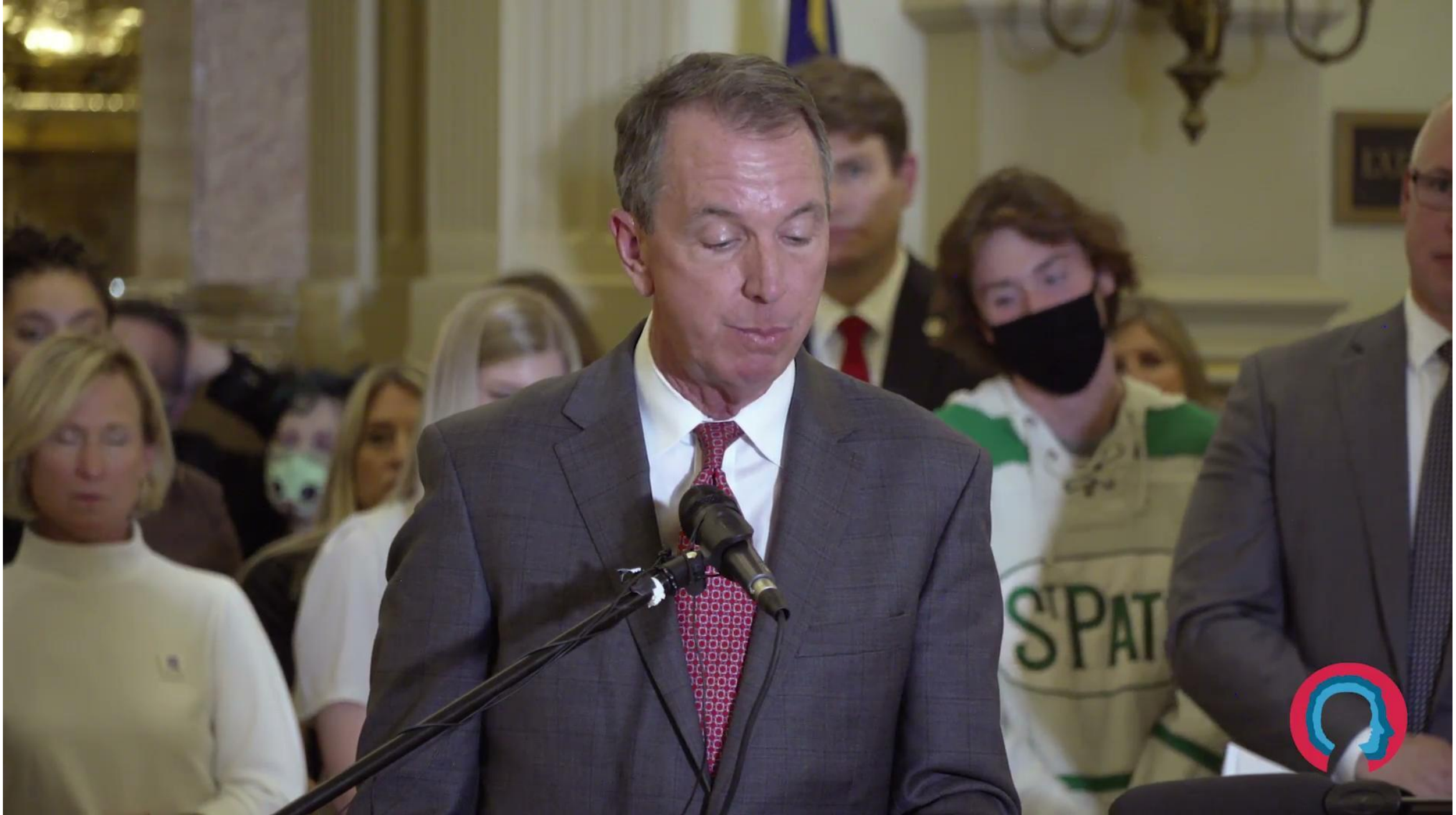
# Media & Education drives policy: 2017



# Deceptively Different: 2018







# HB21-1317 highlights

## Enhancing health and safety protections in these areas:

- › Potency research review to be determined by University of Colorado, School of Public Health and scientific review committee
- › Adoption of a medical marijuana tracking system that treats medical more like a medicine and required training for doctors recommending
- › Required toxicology and data collection for all “non natural deaths” ages 25 and under
- › Making it more difficult for 18-20 yr olds to get a med card therefore, reducing marijuana available for distribution in our schools
- › Reduction of daily purchase limit of marijuana concentrates for 18-20 yr olds







# Public misperception continues:

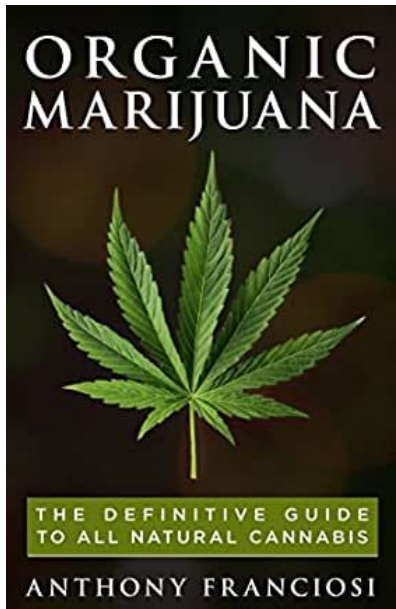
Big differences between  
**Decriminalization/Legalization**

VS

Full-blown profit-driven  
**Commercialization**



# The false messages our kids continue to hear





# THC Potency Matters



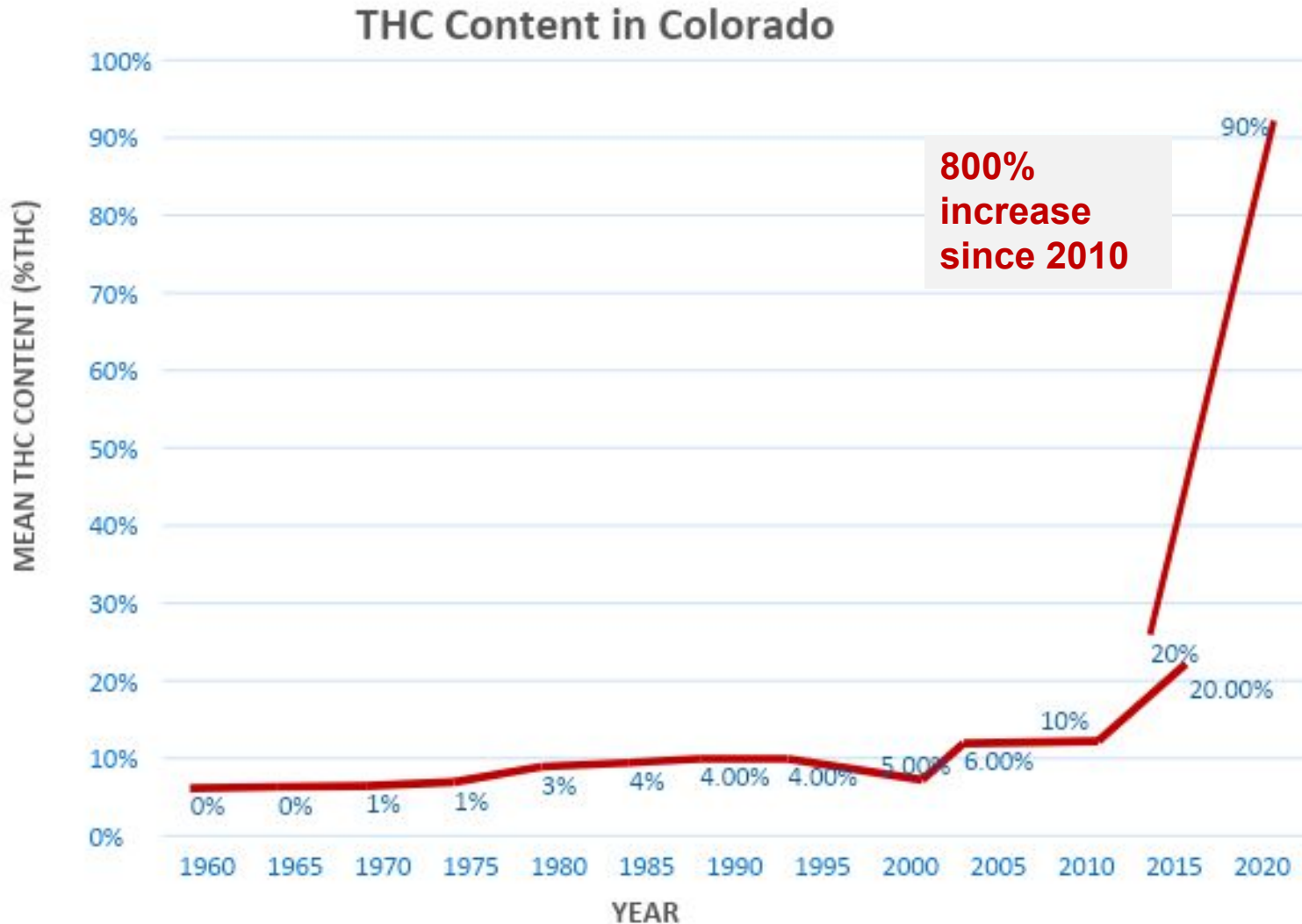
After the Dutch observed negative impacts from rising THC potencies, a team of health experts concluded that **THC potencies above 15% should be considered a hard drug, like cocaine.**

**Nearly 93% of all products found in CO in 2020 were over 15%**

Laar MV et al. Limitations to the Dutch cannabis toleration policy, assumptions underlying the reclassification of cannabis above 15% THC. In J Drug Policy 2016;34:58-64.



# Massive increase in THC Potency



2019

90% THC in Concentrates

2006

8.5% THC

2000

5% THC | NO concentrates

1997

4.5% THC

1960-80

Less than 2% THC

Multiple studies show serious problems with high THC: **addiction, psychosis, depression, anxiety, sleep problems, suicide, violence.**

# Commercialization Has Radically Changed Marijuana

Packaging and THC portion amounts minimize risks to consumer and better address inaccurate assumptions vs actual product effects

THEN



Before 2000,  
THC Potency in Marijuana  
was under 5%



NOW



Today, THC potency in  
products like shatter can  
exceed 90%.




# High-potency THC linked with a TRIPLED risk for psychosis

Study analyzed 780 people ages 18–65,  
410 with first-episode psychosis and 370 healthy  
controls

**HIGH-POTENCY THC** (15% THC or more) **3X** INCREASED RISK OF PSYCHOSIS

**DAILY USE** (15% THC or more) **5X** INCREASED RISK OF PSYCHOSIS

LOW POTENCY (less than 5% THC) HAD NO ASSOCIATED RISK FOR  
PSYCHOSIS



**Honey**

**Shatter**

**Honeycomb**

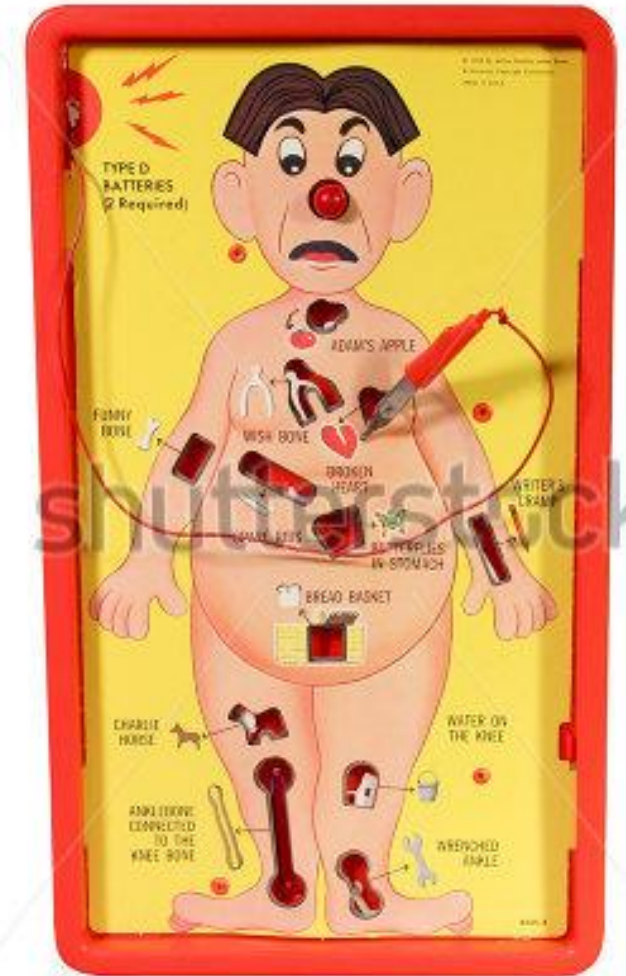


# No standard serving size



# THC methods of intake: From Top to Bottom

- › Eye drops
- › Nasal sprays
- › Smoking, vaping, dabbing
- › Eating
- › Drinking
- › Inhalers
- › Topical body products (lotions, oils lip balms)
- › Lubricants
- › Suppositories



# Thcphotos.org

THC  
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IT'S NOT JUST A PLANT

TODAY'S MARIJUANA



# Talk about Deceptive – Alarming High Amounts of Hidden THC

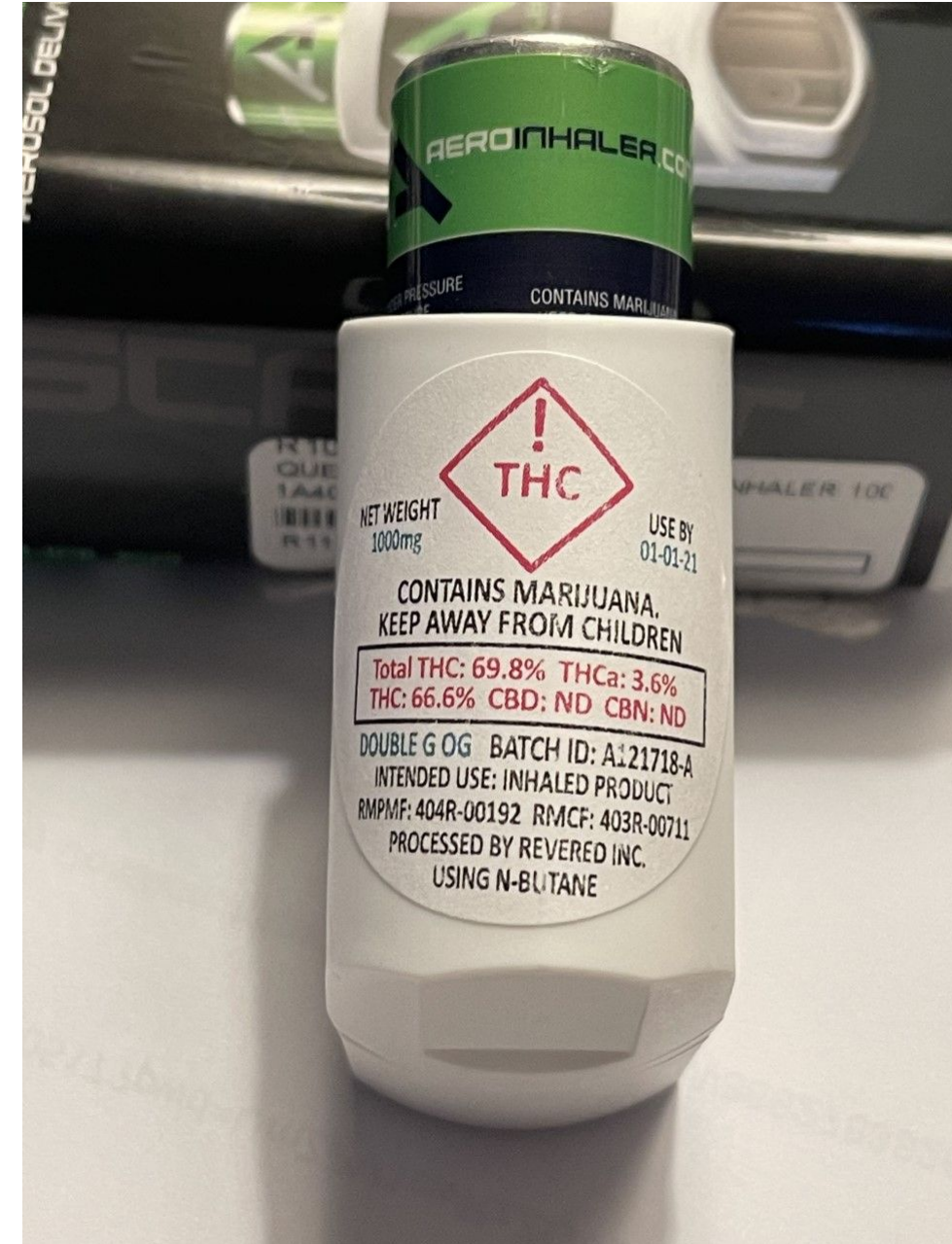


1000 mg inhaler  
Sold on rec mrkt

Total THC in  
product: 69.8%=  
698mg

Label peels off  
easily

Looks like any  
other inhaler





# Breath “mist”: sublingual oral spray



# THC tea and honey



# THC: margarita drink rimmer





THC “pixie stix” & promises of being smarter, sexier and happier





# Not all pot is created equal

Urgent need for better education, consumer disclosures, and regulations



CAN YOU SPOT  IN TODAY'S POT?

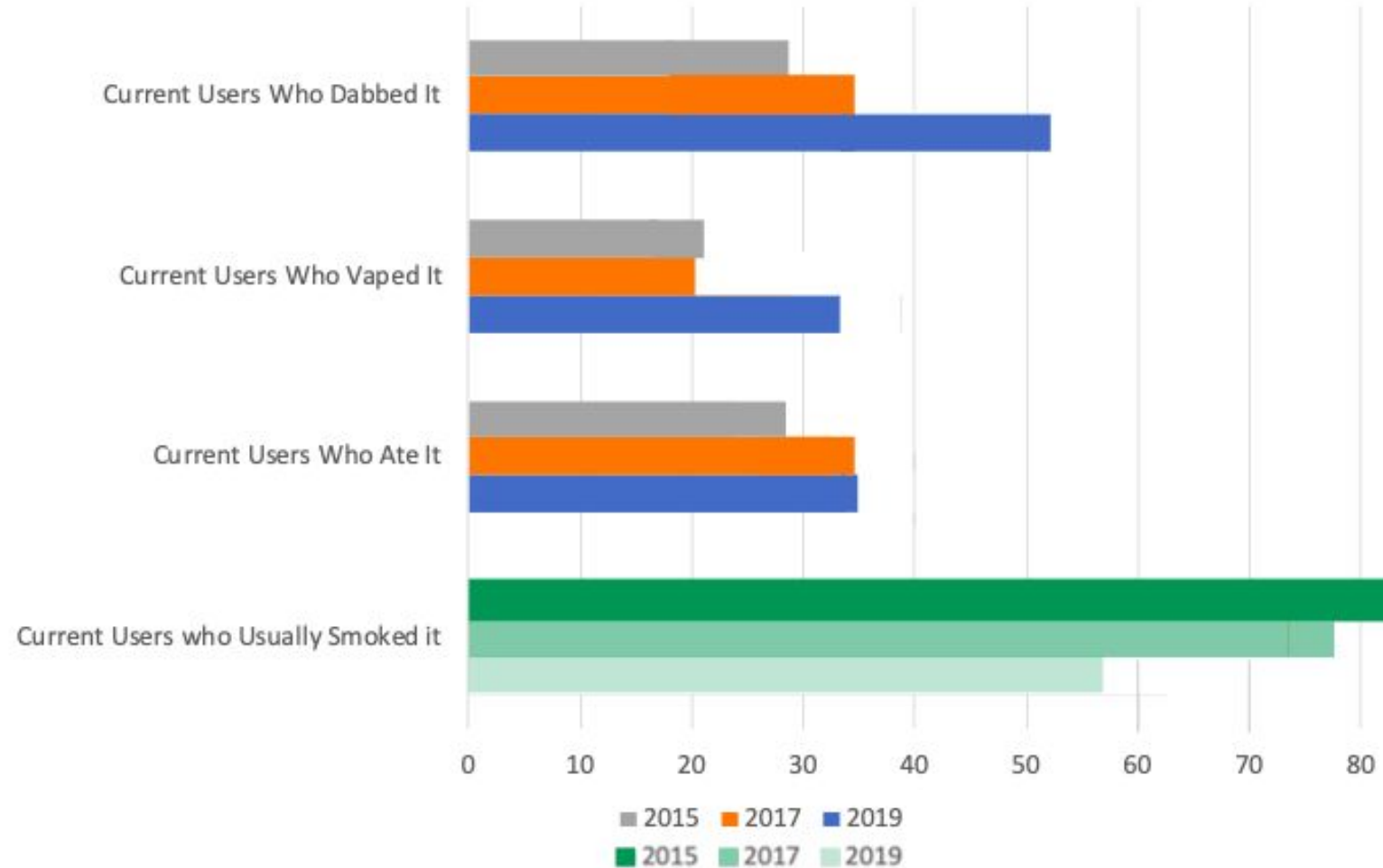
# High Potency THC is hurting CO Kids

\*CDPHE Monitoring Health Concerns Related to Marijuana in Colorado: 2018 summary

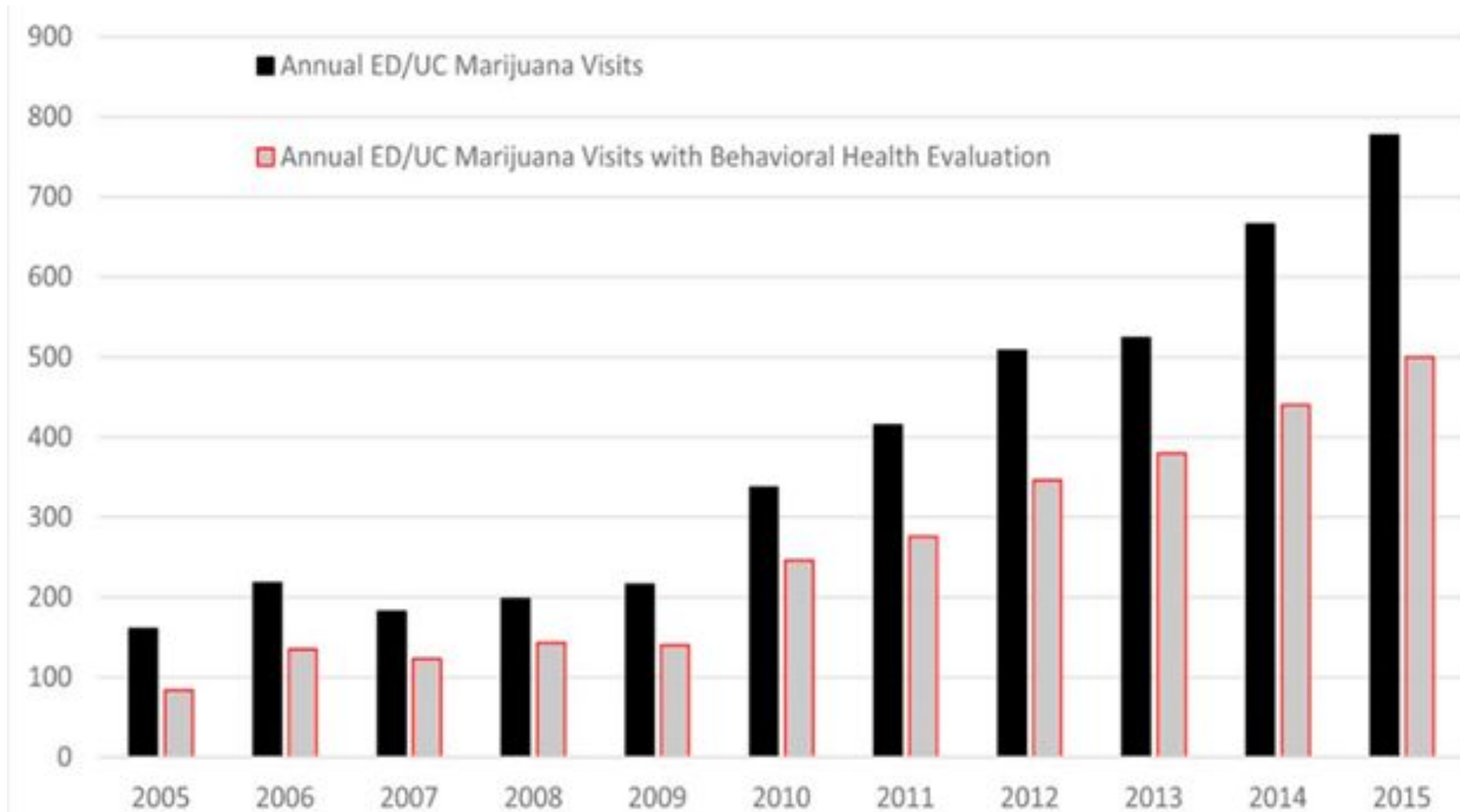
- › Weekly use associated with: deficits in learning, memory, math and reading skills as well as up to 8 point reduction in IQ points
- › MJ use is associated with failure to graduate from high school and/or finish college
- › More likely to experience psychotic symptoms as adults (such as hallucinations, paranoia and delusional beliefs)
- › Marijuana is addictive
- › Nearly 49% of teens who regularly use marijuana said they have driven while high
- › Quitting marijuana use can help regain some deficits—one can lower risks of adverse cognitive and mental health outcomes by stopping

## Marijuana Ultra Potent Concentrate Youth Use Trends

2015-2019 - Colorado



# Significant increase in Adolescent Marijuana-Associated Emergency Dept/Urgent Care Visits in Colorado





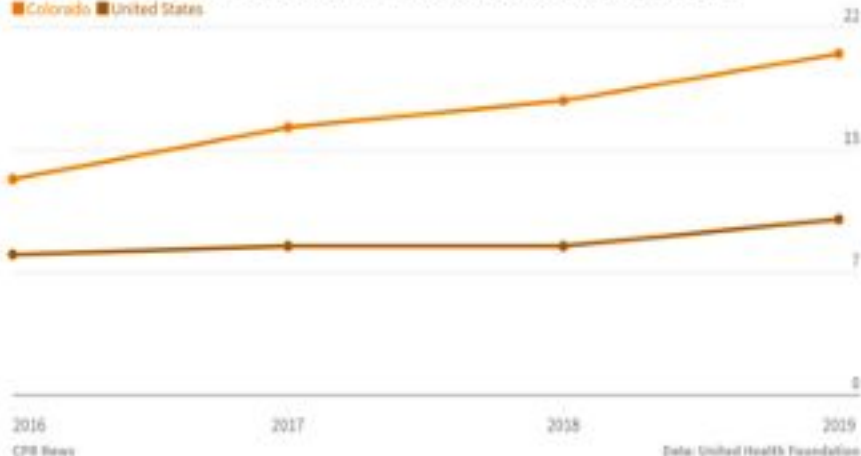
# Teen Deaths By Suicide: Marijuana #1 substance in toxicology screens

## The Rate Of Teen Suicide In Colorado Increased By 58% In 3 Years, Making It The Cause Of 1 In 5 Adolescent Deaths

By John Daley | September 17, 2019

The Number Of Deaths By Suicide Per 100,000 Adolescents Ages 15-19

Colorado United States

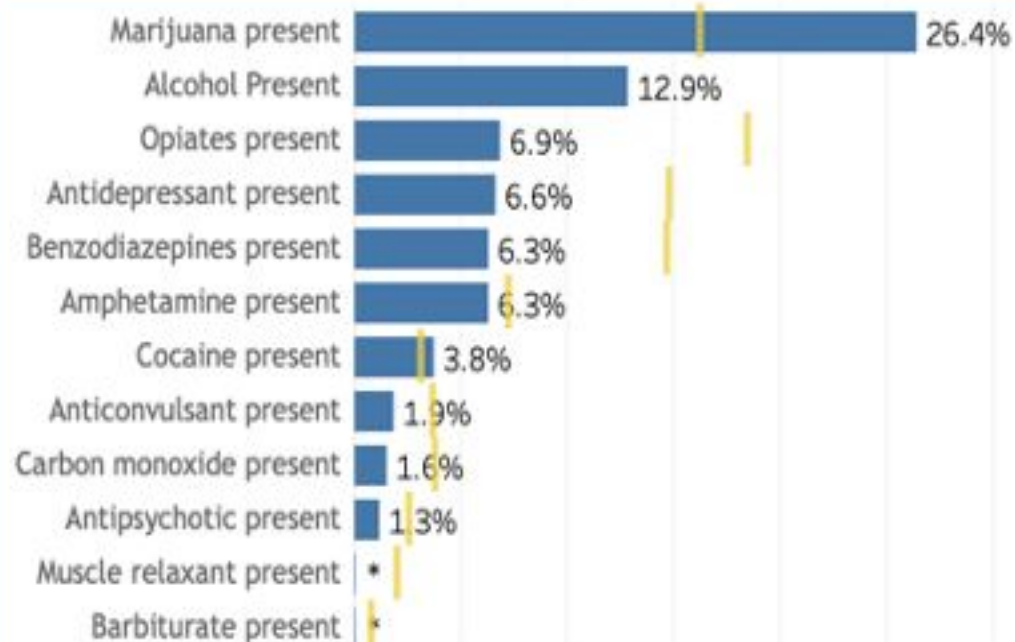


Colorado had the highest increase in the teen suicide rate in the U.S. since 2016.

That's according to a new report by the United Health Foundation, which ranks each state for the health of its women and children.

Dr. Linda Genen, the group's chief medical officer for women's health, said Colorado's teen suicide rate increased 58 percent from 2016 to 2019, but the reason is unclear.

## Marijuana #1 Substance Found in Tox Screens



# The Path Forward

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM COLORADO'S MARIJUANA EXPERIMENT

**SMART** **CO**

# We would love your continued partnership!

- › MFZ: To establish and clearly identify a designated marijuana free zone for kids, families and community members
- › This project reinforces our commitment to teaching young people healthy habits and our promise of protecting kids from the unintended consequences of high-THC marijuana
- › One Chance is excited to make a positive impact through finding MFZ community partners throughout the state—we need your help!







**Our kids are our future!  
Thank you for listening.**

**Julie Dreifaldt**

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[OneChanceToGrowUp.org](http://OneChanceToGrowUp.org)